

OneCorban

Letting LGBT Students & Alumni of Corban University know that they're not alone.

LGBT? Start Here

You found us.

Maybe you overheard people talking about OneCorban (“the gay group”), maybe you saw us on Facebook, or through Google.

You might be nervous.

Even about looking at this site. Maybe you came to Corban, hiding your orientation — hiding “*that one thing*” — and hoping that going to a Christian University would fix that issue. Maybe you’re not sure what you think about LGBT issues, and you want to hear a different side than what you’ve heard from chapel speakers or professors — but you’re worried that if you’re found exploring this, people might begin to suspect something.

You might be hurt.

Though a Christian university is largely a great place to be — it can be hurtful if you’re LGBT. You’ve probably heard people called *fag*, or heard guys in the dorm use the *no homo* disclaimer, or heard people whisper about if *homosexuals* go to Corban. You might have tried reparative therapy, or explored groups like Exodus International. You might have been told that your feelings are wrong, that your attractions are due to an absent parent, or that you must be celibate for life.

You might be angry.

You might be angry at God. Really angry. You might be feeling that this is not what you expected out of life. You might be frustrated that many around you are dating and getting married and that these things are off-limits to you because of...*that one thing*. You might feel marginalized in your youth group, your church, your home — even your dorm.

Still — you found us.

Whatever you’re feeling and whoever you are: you are **not** alone. There are more of us at Corban than

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About

OneCorban was started in 2012 with a simple purpose: to let LGBT students and alumni of Corban know that they are not alone. Around this time, many LGBT groups were beginning at Christian colleges and universities around the nation — typically at evangelical institutions similar to Corban. We are made up of current students and alumni of Corban, and desire that students on campus would know that an alternate view on sexuality exists that still affirms Christian beliefs.

While each of us have ties to the university, we are not recognized or do we represent Corban University, its faculty, or administration.

As appears on OneCorban.org on 8/16 at 5:11pm Mountain Time

Stories

Here, we'll list stories — some public and some anonymous — from LGBT and allied students and alumni. If you would like to share your story (it can be anonymous!), please contact us at onecorban@gmail.com. Thank you so much to these **brave** folks who have shared part of their narratives publicly.

LGBT+ Students & Alumni:

- [Ken, 2011](#)
- [Anonymous, 2010](#)
- [Mark, 2016](#)
- [Blaine, 2010](#)

Allied Students & Alumni:

- [Colby, 2004](#)

Colby Martin, '04 – Ally

“Hey Colby, mind if I ask you a quick question?”

It was 9:55, just five minutes before chapel was about to start. The place was filling up with a student body who had just returned from winter break and there was a buzz in the air. One of their favorite worship leaders (my little brother, who spent about a Semester at Corban back in 2002) was on campus to lead worship, and I was slated to give the chapel message. The band had gathered backstage to pray and I had just ensured that my slides were all set with the gal doing media and was heading back to join them for prayer. I didn't make it, for now standing in front of me was one of the Corban Staff who was partially in charge of the chapels, and he wanted to ask me a question.

For two reasons I knew what he was going to ask: because of what had transpired recently in my life, and because of how visibly nervous he seemed in asking me a question about wanting to ask me a question.

But to understand my prescience, I suppose we need to go backwards four months.

In September of 2011 the military ban against gays and lesbians serving our country, known as Don't Ask Don't Tell, had finally been lifted by President Obama. At that time my family and I were outside Phoenix, AZ where I had spent the past five years serving as the Pastor of Worship and Arts at a young and growing church. However, like most of Arizona, the church was theologically right of center, and even though my convictions on the issue of sexuality had migrated far to the left during my time there, no one really knew about it. Because I didn't talk about it. Because it wasn't a good idea, if you get my drift.

Nonetheless, when DADT was repealed my normally-tight-lipped self let out a little bit of air by proclaiming on my Facebook that I was "glad this day finally came." And, well, I'll keep the story short, but that post led to an "emergency board meeting" three days later wherein I was forced to give an account for my theological position on homosexuality. And that I did. I shared with 8 other men things that I hadn't shared with a lot of my family or friends. That I, a Bible-believing, card-carrying Evangelical Christian, with a degree from a Conservative Baptist College, no longer believed that the Bible condemns homosexuality. The meeting lasted a couple of hours and it wasn't pretty. That was on a Friday. On Tuesday I was called in the office and terminated effective immediately.

My wife and I had to sell our home and move back to Oregon to live with family while we sorted out what to do next. So when January came around and my brother was invited to lead worship for the first chapel of 2012 he asked if I wanted to come and be the speaker. This was the 5th or 6th time I had been back to Corban since I graduated in 2004 to either lead worship or speak at chapel and I couldn't wait to talk about what was going on in my life. But no, I wasn't going to talk about that.

You see, I'm not an idiot. At least, I don't think I am...? I had no desire to go and unnecessarily start a dialogue about an issue that wasn't my place to start. If you're reading this then you know, likely even better than I do, the conservative climate at Corban. Filled with wonderfully kind and lovingly beautiful people, and simultaneously filled with an ideology that doesn't seem overly concerned about rocking the boat. Questioning the status quo. Engaging in theological discussions wherein Baptist Theology might be questioned. In fact, I think some of the professors felt they failed me back in 2004 when I graduated as a self-proclaimed Armenian!

But by January of 2012 word had gotten around about my recent termination, and word proceed to get around even quicker when people learned why.

Which, if we return back to that morning in the chapel at 9:55, now explains why I had a pretty good guess as to what the “question” was going to be.

“Of course,” I replied, “what’s up?”

“Well...” feet shuffling... “I’m just curious what you’re going to be talking about this morning?”

My born-with-it slightly crooked smile broke out and graciously responded with, “don’t worry, I’m not here this morning to talk about that.”

I went on to soothe the anxiety of this wonderful professor by telling him that I was planning on talking about a Theology of Doubt. To share how those past three and a half months had been unbelievably difficult in so many ways, and how I felt a certain invitation to lean in to the pain, the darkness, the doubts, and therein meet the God of the Cross.

His relief was visible. Chuckling to myself, I sauntered to my chair and began singing with every one else.

The chapel was a smashing success... for about half the school. The other half didn’t fully take to this “theology of doubt” concept, but that’s okay. It got people talking and thinking, which is part of my calling. Looking back, it was a great message to go out on.

, that’s right, “go out on.” As you can guess, I have not been invited back to Corban since then. Well, that’s not technically true. Two years ago

I was contacted by an ASB Officer who was at that chapel on doubt and who wanted to bring me back for another round. However, when his superiors discovered he made such an invitation, he was informed of the necessity to rescind said invitation.

I don’t know if I’ve “officially” been black-listed, but that’s how it feels.

And honestly, I'm okay with that. They are doing their best to live out their convictions as best as they know how, and part of that includes (I'm sure) a need to protect the flock from potentially dangerous and destructive perspectives on such hot topic issues like sexuality. But even though I understand it, it still saddens me. Oh how I long for institutions like Corban, and churches of a similar ilk, to release their grip just ever so slightly on the need to control and protect and defend. If the Gospel is true, it doesn't need defended. Certainly not by us. Jesus didn't lift a finger to defend himself, to argue, to control. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Not quite the same thing as "once you've got the truth, put in on lock down baby!"

My four years at Corban (then, Western Baptist) were four of my favorite years of my life. The students were a blast, the teachers inspiring, the atmosphere uplifting and loving. It was (and I believe still is) an incredible school that is doing wonderful work for the Kingdom of God. But my hope and my prayer is that those in positions of influence would begin to hear the voice of the Divine calling them forward in to a new and different way of thinking and believing on the issue of sexuality. Far too many people's lives and well-being are at stake. Even if they never move theologically, and never come to a full acceptance of our LGBT brothers and sisters as equal heirs in God's Kingdom, then I hope they will go above and beyond to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for those who do not identify as straight. So that no student (or faculty!) would ever feel the need to stay in the closet, suffering shame and depression, because it wasn't safe for them otherwise.

I am Colby Martin. In 2004 I received my Bachelors of Science in Pastoral Ministry from Corban University, and today I am a proud straight ally for my LGBT brothers and sisters. Currently my wife and I co-pastor a Progressive Christian Church in San Diego, CA called Sojourn Grace Collective, where we are working to help build a future that will no longer have a need for groups like One Corban. But of course, for now, I am so glad they exist. Because WE exist.

To learn more about where I've landed Biblically on this issue, visit my site <http://www.unclobber.com>.

You can follow my blog at <http://www.colbymartinonline.com>
And check out our church at <http://www.sojourngrace.com>, and hear

sermons that are grounded in Scripture, rooted in Christ, but open to a more progressive way of seeing things.

Loving God and neighbor,

Colby.

Ken Smalley, '11 – Gay

While attending Corban I met some great people, people who genuinely care and are there to support you. Being a Baptist I was very conflicted, in that I wanted accountability in regards to my sexual desires towards men but also wanted to hide that struggle desperately. I was approached one day regarding my internet browsing history — which led to a meeting with the IT department, my RD, and the Residence Life Director. Essentially there were scriptures read to me regarding homosexuality and the sin I was committing. I was required to sit in that room, shaking and crying until I said out loud that I was struggling with being gay.

While all parties involved wanted to help me, I've never felt so alone in my life as I did in that two hour meeting. I was faced with a few options, either leave the college, or enter into a conversion therapy program and attend counseling. At 19, I was facing being thrown out of college while pursuing my dreams. I went with the latter option and entered into this program.

On top of my already intense schedule with music courses, performances, private lessons, and other courses, I had to take 3 hours a week to complete this online program, meet with the Residence Life Director to discuss it and meet with the therapist separately. I fought hard to change who I am, to mold myself into the model heterosexual christian man. I had accountability partners who checked on me regularly, but none of that made it any easier.

I joined the Army Reserves after my first year at Corban. Over the summer, I went to basic training and had a lot of time to myself. I used that time to think, pray, and accept myself for who God created me to be.

After accepting myself and completing military training I returned to Corban, still having to complete the course, mentoring and counseling. I made the decision to not only accept myself but to put myself in places where others would accept me too. I left Corban, withdrew and

unfortunately had to do so without providing a reason in order to keep my record “clean.”

While going through this conversion therapy I will say that the staff was definitely coming from a place of love and caring, but definitely not a place of understanding. I will never forget the Christian men who took me to the health department to get tested for STD’s the first time in my life, the conversations that we had, and that we were able to have after I left Corban. It was equally uncomfortable for all of us, but I’m truly grateful to have accepted myself, my sexuality, and through that opening my mind to understand so many other things/people out there in the world.

My challenge to you is this: If you are struggling with accepting yourself, or your brother’s and sisters around you please reach out, ask for help to understand and listen to each other. There is always support from someone nearby. If you have any questions, just want to talk, or hear more of the story I’m always here.

Love,

Kenneth Smalley
kenneth.e.smalley@gmail.com

Anonymous Student, '10 – Gay

“Do you think that there are any gay guys at Corban?”

“Maybe. I just don’t get it though. Why would they want to go here?”

“Dunno.”

This was a conversation that I heard time and time again in different forms while I was a student at Corban.

Come to think of it, that conversation was better than the others I heard in the dorms:

“What’s up you faggots?”

“I just don’t get why any dude would want to put his dick in another dude’s butt.”

“Why don’t they understand God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve?”

“Dude, stop being so gay.”

Were any of those lines uncomfortable for you to read? Think of what it was like to hear them.

Now, I’ll give the speakers the benefit of the doubt. They might not have had any LGBT family members, they might have grown up in a world where they were taught a specific paradigm, they might have simply forgotten to think before speaking, etc.

But it wasn’t just in the dorms – it was in the classrooms too:

“The Trinity, I think, shows gives us one of the biggest supports against gay marriage.”

“Homosexuality is the biggest issue facing our churches today.”

“There is hope for the homosexual.”

I’ll also give faculty and staff the benefit of the doubt – they are some of the most kind, caring, and loving people I have ever met. They believe a specific paradigm, and that’s where they come from.

However, it wasn’t just the classrooms and dorms. It was in chapel. It was in church on Sunday. It was in the dining hall. It was walking through the mailroom. It was in Common Grounds.

It was everywhere.

And then we’re told that if we’re “struggling,” we can reach out for help without fear of disciplinary action.

? I mean, *really*?

Why would anyone want to do that? The statement has already been made. The culture is already there. If I was “struggling” with my sexuality, if I really did want help – do you think that Corban would be a comfortable place?

If Corban is a “safe place” to think through issues and wrestle with what we believe – why is there such a programmed message regarding sexuality? Why do we only invite ex-gay and non-affirming chapel speakers?

What are we afraid of?

If Corban is a place of Christian love, where we show kindness toward each other – why is language like that tolerated on campus? Why don’t we have a statement against harassment based on sexual orientation (but have one for race, color, national/ethnic origin, sex, age, and physical disability)?

What are we afraid of?

Mark McLean, '16–Asexual

My name is Mark McLean.

When I enrolled at Corban, I knew on some level that there wouldn’t be a whole lot of LGBT+ understanding. I mean, Mom and I read through the school’s statement of faith together. Considering a definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman is listed before Original Sin, the nature of angels, and the eventual resurrection of all humanity on Judgment Day, I could assume some level of significance. Upon actually arriving here, however, I discovered that the school’s atmosphere as a whole is... different.

Please understand, I do applaud Corban University for being willing to at least make some steps toward actual acceptance. The mantra “love the sinner, hate the sin” seems to be what’s preached for the most part, and even though that’s kind of like saying “I love your face, but your nose offends me and everything I stand for.” I especially applaud my RA last year for calling out people who used “That’s gay,” or “You’re a fag” as pejoratives, and I haven’t been privy to any real declarations that LGBT+ folks are going straight to Hell. The main issue that I have with Corban’s student body (since that’s the only group I have any real experience with) is that of attitude. It’s kind of hard to explain, but here’s the one real example that sticks out in my mind.

My first few weeks at Corban, the Bible studies we did in our halls were mainly centered around giving testimonies, introducing ourselves, and generally getting to know one another. Each hall member gave his

testimony in order of seniority. As such, one of my first experiences with Corban students' attitude toward LGBT+ individuals came in the form of a five to ten minute war story about how proud one of my hallmates was about getting into a debate with some supporters of same-sex marriage, and how he totally stuck it to them, and on and on and on. I left. I'm ashamed to say that I spent the remainder of Bible study in the bathroom, pacing and fuming and generally doing nothing actually productive about the situation. That night, I failed to hold my brother in Christ responsible for his attitude, and I failed to defend people who need defending, and I apologize for that, from the bottom of my heart, because I've also come to know that those moments happen every day. It's not always a speech from a hallmate; sometimes it's an offhand remark, or an answer given in class, or a post shared on Facebook. These microaggressions happen all the time at Corban, and it's honestly kind of sickening to think about.

To anyone out there who has struggled with being at Corban, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, asexual, anyone, I am beyond sorry. I do love this university, but I absolutely know how hurtful it can be. You're not alone, not by a long shot. Stay strong.

Blaine Bartlett, '10—Lesbian

I loved the rain more that semester than I ever had before. I spent months walking up and down that hill with my hood pulled over my head and my eyes cast down, but when it rained, no one gave it a second thought. I prayed for rainy days. When raindrops met teardrops on my cheeks, they didn't discriminate, and kept my secret from the world. The chilly fall air was my ally when I began to tremble ever so slightly in class. I was terrified. Broken. I felt so alone.

My struggle started long before arriving at Corban. As a kid, I would pray that God would make me "normal". All my friends had crushes on boys, and I wanted to as well, I just didn't know how. I didn't even know what it meant to have a crush until I met Sarah when I was a freshman in high school—and I hated myself for it. I begged God to take those feelings away. I tried to use sports, extracurriculars and youth group events to distract myself from the feelings that were always lurking in the corner, but they never truly left.

I thought going to Corban would fix me. I immersed myself in the school's culture and enjoyed every minute of it, but I secretly noted the differences between myself and all the other women around me. My journey to

become “normal” drove me to seek out accountability. The staff was great about never making me feel like a freak, and for that, I am very grateful. However, because of the nature of my confession and the stance the school takes on it, there was nothing they could do to make me feel any less alone. I went through an online program that was designed to help me fight same-sex attraction—complete with homework assignments and special tasks to accomplish throughout the week. I thought it would help, so I bought into it and prayed that I would one day I would feel worthy to enter into fellowship with my Savior and the church once more.

Upon completing the program and reintegrating myself into normal campus life, I was hopeful. It didn’t last long. I tried to use all the tools I had learned to keep my attraction to other women at bay. I tried to invest in healthy friendships. I even tried to go on a date with a man from my church back home. Nothing helped. I spent my last year at Corban very unsure of who I was, keeping my head down, and lying to God about how glad I was that I had been “fixed” at last.

Shortly after graduating, I began really evaluating who I was and what direction my life was taking. I stopped lying to God in my prayers—I no longer pretended like I was straight when I talked to Him. I told Him I was mad that I didn’t feel attraction towards men. This wasn’t easy, but for the first time in my life, I was honest with my Father about my true feelings. I realized the time I had spent lying to God, I had really been driving a wedge between us. My walk became more raw than ever before. I wouldn’t say it was necessarily comfortable, but it was certainly better. I read the book of John, and something struck me about an all too familiar passage. John 3:16 is one of those no-brainer verses, but the back half of that verse was where I really found reassurance. “Whosoever” became my only comfort when I wondered what I was doing and if I was going straight to hell as a result of my attraction to women.

After I was able to stop lying to God, I stopped lying to myself, and then slowly stopped lying to those around me—friends first, and then family. I knew that most of the people in my life would be displeased with my choice to live openly as a lesbian, and I was prepared for that. I prayed that God would give me the strength to not become hardened, but to love everyone; unconditionally, as He has always loved me. I can’t tell a fairy tale story about how everyone embraced me and didn’t judge. I can’t even tell a story about how it gets better. What I can say is that only God can deliver the patience, love and strength it takes to face the responses from the church. I’ve had people say unimaginably hurtful things to me, and it is

only by His grace that I continue to love His people and choose to fellowship with the Body of Christ. Sometimes I still wonder if what I'm doing is wrong. Sometimes I still struggle with why I was made so different from my friends. I do not believe it is a choice to be gay—the choice lies in what we do with these feelings. Some of our brothers and sisters deny themselves, and I respect that choice as well. For me, I have chosen to be open about my attraction towards women. I am willing to accept the stereotypes and judgments that come with that choice. I am also willing to accept the challenge of proving those stereotypes wrong and working towards loving God's children despite any preconceived notions, judgments or hurts that the LGBT community may have inflicted on them.

If you find yourself identifying with any element of my story, I hope you are comforted by the fact that you are absolutely not alone. I found resources like the ones on this site to be invaluable on my quest to self discovery. Utilize the resources available and please don't hesitate to contact me or any of the other men and women whom have trudged down this path before you. You are not alone. You are still loved. And never forget, you are still His.

In Christ,
Blaine

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